Aristasia Treasure Trove

A Millinery Primer Part 2: Feminine Glory Sunday, Jun 24 2007

Aristasian Fashion and Stylearistasia7:39 pm

Miss Norma continues:
Please gather around for the next little lesson in millinery lore. We have already seen how hats are an essential feminine garment, as perfectly feminine as, say, frothy, lacy, silky undies, but with this obvious difference: a hat is an *outie,* that is, always displayed, worn to be *seen,* plumage, really, not some delicate secret, soft as eider down, known only to a girl herself (and felt by her always) but glimpsed by others only on the rarest of chances. So if hats are not silky and lacy and frothy and downy-soft (though they sometimes may be), just why, then, are they so very feminine?

Now being a philosopherette is not an employment prerequisite for a Kadorie junior fashion editrix, so I can make no claims to any particular sagacity, yet it seems to me that hats allow Maid to display, nay, *flaunt* her essential feminine links to beauty, fecundity, gracefulness … indeed, to the most exalted other-than-Maid aspects of Dea's creations. So Maid appropriates the most beautiful, *not-Maid* manifestations of the manifest world – feathers, flowers and fruit, and fur – which for this very reason have found their way into the milliner's art, so that they might adorn and embellish, indeed *crown,* the head and brow of Dea's finest creation – Maid herself. When a girl wears a fine hat she is glorifying Dea by wreathing Her finest creation in the subservient beauty of flowers, feathers and fruit – indeed, Maid would adorn her hats with butterfly wings, too, were they sufficiently durable.

But too many words, not enough pictures, pettes, so here are some proofs from the session Stephanie G. shot today on the hotel veranda, after the sun had gone behind the wall, so that the light would be softer. Please take note of the long, soft, green gloves (how can you miss 'em?)

For Part 1 see A Millinery Primer

Leave a Response »

A Millinery Primer Wednesday, Jun 6 2007

Aristasian Fashion and Stylearistasia9:07 pm

Miss Norma *is the junior fashion editor for a Kadorian magazine:*

We here in Kadoria put great stock in hats: a Kadorian girl would not be seen in public without a hat any more than without any upper garment at all, so important an article of clothing it is. Don't all you hatless pettes feel absolutely, well, um, *vulnerable* and *exposed?* A Kadorian girl has a large hat wardrobe, as a rule, and can quite easily spend a whole afternoon (or even a day) looking at *dozens* of new hats without finding exactly the right one!

As *McCall's* junior fashion editor, it is my duty to educate all you hatless pettes from strange provinces on millinery matters through a series of didactic and racinating images from our fashion archives. So here is the first one – a pette in the opening phase of the complex ritual of Choosing the Right Hat, a sort of a dance between pette and shop girl. (This could be the interior of any milliner's in any city in Kadoria.) First rule: one *never* selects the first hat proffered: it may be perfect in all respects save one: it is the first.

Choosing a proper hat has many nuances which every Kadorie girl who wants to be counted smartly-dressed should learn. First of all, hats change with the seasons – any girl knows that: a flowery April halo is not worn in autumn, just as a jaunty October tricorn in amber, set off, say, with a brush of pheasant feathers, could never be sported in spring without attracting glances or raising elegantly lined eyebrows. And, of course, one does not wear the same April hat to bridge on Wednesdays as the one one wears to church or to visit a new mother in the hospital. Further, what may be proper for a young career pette will not do at all for a grandmother of sixty, even in the same season and at the same social function. Then, to be sure, one's mood often dictates which bridge, church or visiting-a-new-mother hat one might choose. Hats may be pert or staid, joyful or somber, flirtatious or forbidding, modest or proud. By these several examples one can readily understand why a Kadorian of impeccable taste might have a fairly large collection of hats, running into the dozens, constantly changing as she grows older. As I explained earlier, a hat is an essential item of feminine apparel, like dress, stockings and shoes, not a mere "fashion accessory." Indeed, one's hat is often the central element of an outfit, providing the desired *éclat*.

But to complicate matters further, there are other, at times vague or almost sub-conscious reasons besides season, occasion, age and mood that dictate wearing a particular hat. Should her wardrobe suddenly prove deficient when such reasons make themselves felt (though often not known), a pette may find herself irresistibly drawn to the milliner's shop, like an iron filing is to a magnet, for still just one more hat. Take Amanda R., brunette, for example, shown in the accompanying picture, seated before the milliner's mirror, a possible hat on her head, two more on her knees (note the stole on her lap, by the way). Amanda has been recently disappointed in love, she recently lost a most eligible and delectable blonde to another brunette (there was quite an ugly scene late one afternoon at the office). Amanda fancies that a new hat – a new look, a millinery make-over – will help her hold on to the next blonde, even as far as the altar, she secretly hopes. Perhaps she is right, though her look is not the reason her blonde went astray: it had really to do with some little imperfection of character, something out of harmony within herself, (look carefully at her expression),

which she will no doubt discover in time. Amanda is seeking consolation in hats, another ancient ritual, but one suspects she is ignoring the truth and wants to believe a new hat may answer her prayers.

Also see: Part 2 and Part 3 of the Millinery Primer

Leave a Response »

Gloves Thursday, May 10 2007

Aristasian Fashion and Stylearistasia2:20 pm

A conversation from the Girls' Town archives:

Miss Karen:
I was wondering what you pettes thought about gloves. I confess I do not often wear a hat as they never seem to suit me (what am I doing wrong?). But gloves are something a girl can always wear and they make an outfit look so utterly up-to-date. I often feel a pair of gloves can make all the difference between a so-so appearance and a quite real one. After all, most inhabitants of the Pit really don't seem to know what gloves are – they think they are things to keep one's hands warm. Do any other pettes share my belief in the importance of gloves?

Miss Victoria Mayhew:
In an etiquette handbook from 1963 (which corresponds roughly to what we would consider Infra-Quirinelle), Miss Amy Vanderbilt, an expert if ever there was one, advises all ladies to wear gloves out of doors. In fact she says that while many maids dispense with wearing a hat except on formal occasions (weddings and the like), gloves ought to be mandatory no matter what. How else are we to protect our hands from the dust of the road, the sun and the elements, and keep them not only lovely but clean?

Miss Nicola:
I quite agree with Miss Mayhew, gloves should be worn and a wide variety are available. Quite often thin lace or cotton gloves can be found for the warm days of summer, as well as the more familiar woollen gloves for winter. I remember reading an etiquette book which said that gloves should be worn outside at all times, but a maid can take them off inside if she so desires.

Miss Petrouchka:
I am completely in agreement with these thoughts about gloves. A nice pair of gloves can transform an outfit and make it clear that one is wearing up-to-date clothes seriously rather than as a sort of pastiche, if you know what I mean.

Rosalind Russell, that most superior of brunettes in at least one of her films wears her gloves even for eating, and I seem to remember that one of those delicious pin-up artists (was it Zoe Mozert?) always wore white gloves when she painted her delightfully erotic girl-pictures.

Now that is style, is it not?

Miss Johannah:
I have to agree that gloves can make almost any outfit look real. I have a few pairs, but I really need to wear them more. I feel like such a lady with them on.

Miss Mariana:
In my southern travels I saw a curious pale and dark-eyed blonde who wore a wonderful serpentine gold ring with an emerald outside her black glove. What do my blonde friends here think of that?

Miss Annalinde:
Much has been said about gloves recently and the way they add realness to an outfit and confidence to a girl. One of my favourite references to gloves comes in the Aristasian novel *The Feminine Regime.* In this scene Lavinia is in great distress because her friend Amanda is about to be taken away from her by her (Amanda's) mother. Nonetheless she is won over by the mother in the first instant of meeting her, owing to her grace and feminine poise. Note how the glove seems to epitomise these qualities:

> But she must turn her attention to the lady to whom she was being introduced. What a consummate Mummie. No wonder Amanda loved her so. What a chic, upright, Imperial Mummie … Lavinia took the outstretched hand, a firm hand encased in the thinnest, softest black leather driving glove, that left one's moist, adolescent hand smelling of fine leather and good scent and grown-up femininity…

Does this not express something of the inner mystery of gloves?

Miss Johannah:
I had the most lovely day. I walked to the library dressed all in up-to-date clothing. I wore a pretty rose print sundress and a light sweater to protect my arms from the sun. I topped off my outfit with a cartwheel hat and white gloves. It was a beautiful day and when I closed my eyes I could imagine that there were real motor cars passing me on the streets. Someone asked me why I was wearing gloves, to which I replied, "I'm a lady. I wear gloves." This seemed to answer their question and impress them.

I felt beautiful and confident. It was as though I had just stepped out of Quirinelle and at any moment could step back in. It's amazing how wearing real clothing can make me feel so much better. I feel protected. It's as though my little sphere is strong enough to repel the Pit.

I just wanted to share this with all of you.

Miss Annalinde:
Referring back to the conversation on gloves (I love the way these conversations never end in Girls' Town) I wanted to say how much I agree that gloves are the making of any outfit. With a neat and stylish pair of gloves, even the most everyday jacket and skirt is transformed into something up-to-date and utterly un-bongo. Gloves are not just an item of clothing, they are a statement. They are the number one Pit-killer accessory!

And referring back again (how I love referring back) to the mention of a ring worn over gloves – what of bracelets worn over gloves, as in this delightful picture of three Quirrie magnificats.

Now you may say I have departed from our premise of gloves as everyday wear – reverting to our seemingly insatiable penchant (can a penchant be insatiable?) for long dress gloves. Very well. I append also an example that is daywearesque and practical to a T – or should I say for a tea – and yet as stylish and elegant as can possibly be.

Here it is – a perfectly classic leather glove paired with a chunky Art Deco bracelet – guaranteed to make the simplest jumper and skirt look utterly real and equally chic.

Miss Karen:
With the advent of the pink see-through Gamebaby, and relating to the discussion on gloves – not pink see-through gloves – at least, they have not been mentioned though they can be very pretty – well, that brings me to my point as a matter of fact. Miss Dorothy in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* said – of I think a colourful car – "Machines, like gloves, should be either black or white." Now what do you pettes think of this doctrine? It would, of course mean that the white Gamebaby would be your only choice, and then what about gloves? Must they be either black or white? In other words, are we hand-in-glove with the delightful Miss Dorothy, or do we think she is talking through her hat?

Miss Lindie:
The advantage of black gloves or white ones is that they go with just about anything, but this blonde would not like to feel restricted to them, and must confess that she used to own a pair of pink, see-through ones . The objection to pink, see-through machines is that they show the rather too-utilitarian innards of the mechanism. I trust that one's hands are not considered in that light. I am afraid there is nothing very utilitarian about my hands, though I did have a try at sewing a while back.

Miss Kay:
I saw some time ago a real film in which some one driving a burgundy Bentley was described as "a bit flash". The implication being presumably that the car should have been black – or at least white. This was in Vintesse, whence, of course, Miss Dorothy also hails from. Possibly this is a rather austere Vintesse upper-class point of view. As with Infra, it often seems that the provinces with the jinkiest reputations can also be the most austere at times.

It may be that some brunettes adhere to these rules, and possibly even some blondes. But I can hardly imagine a blonde in my native Quirinelle who would restrict herself to black or white gloves, or who would forgo the very possibility of owning a delightful pink automobile.

Leave a Response »

Re-education and Racination Saturday, Apr 28 2007

Aristasian Fashion and Style and Aristasian Society and Culturearistasia8:05 am

Signorina Clarissa asked:

I am relatively new to Aristasia (and I am not so good at English, but I hope you will be patient with me!!!).

I have a question about how a maid can re-racinate and re-educate herself ; especially while being, like I am, 'on her own' and not having the possibility to attend Aristasia-in-Telluria events, nor events in Virtualia (due to the capacity limits of my ordinator), apart from The White Rose Room.

Which books, or films, would you suggest to read or watch, that are particularly charming and where one can be inspired by how maids are clothed, how they behave, talk, or which are the books where one can feel this lost atmosphere of innocence, grace and charm, or even learn about etiquette and proper behaviour? Which up-to-date magazines would you recommend? I am also interested in books that analyze deeper and more subtle subjects, such as Archetypes and their importance. Would that be useful also to read old books in my own language, that are written in a proper language?

On the subject of clothes, I have tried to find nice and feminine up-to-date clothes or accessories on this Elektraspace market, but it's not so evident for me to know how to wear them without a reference or a guide.

Miss Sushuri Madonna answered:

I am sure books and films from your own country will be helpful to you.

It is often said that it is not necessarily the most "artistic" books and films that are the most racinating, but those that give a straightforward picture of the Real World. The books of Agatha Christie are often recommended, as are schoolgirl books from the '20s to the '50s. Schoolgirl books are something of a British institution. Stories of life in girls' schools – usually boarding schools – flourished from the 1920s to the 1950s. They depict an all-female world, usually with values of honour, loyalty, and nobility; thus they make rather excellent Aristasian reading. Many authoresses specialise in them. Angela Brazil, Ethel Talbot, and Elinor Brent-Dyer are important names. The hugely prolific Enid Blyton also wrote numerous books in this genre. There are lots of others and I am sure I have missed out many people's favourites.

In Britain, among films, run-of-the-mill comedies and thrillers are often excellent racinating fare, with lovely street-scenes, sophisticated night-club scenes and in general a charming view of real British life. The ladies tend to dress and speak in ways that we can all profitably emulate. Run-of-the-mill comedies just means ordinary, everyday ones "B features", I think our American friends call them. Nothing spectacular; just straightforward depictions of Quirinelle or Kadoria. Their very "ordinariness" can actually be an advantage in that one is not seeing a "clever slant" on the real world, but just seeing it as it is, through its own eyes, as it were.

Miss Anne Meade had some suggestions:

Now, how about your wardrobe? Well, probably the best thing to do is to start with black and start to build colours around it. First, choose a particular style – perhaps Trentish Chic or Quirrie Crispness or the more stark Kadorian lines. Once the choice has been made, find a black skirt that fits in with it. Quirrie girls usually go for a full circle skirt that comes to somewhere just below the knee. A Trentish lady will want something quite fitted around the hips but perhaps with inverted pleats or a wider bias -cut hemline.

Next, find something for the top half. There is nothing quite as versatile or safe as a basic twin set – and it fits in with any period. For Trent, choose Pastel shades, for Kadoria something like dusty pink or baby blue. For Quirinelle you ought probably to choose bright red or electric blue. The important thing about wearing a twinset is the (hm-hm!) brassiere! Trentish and Kadorian styles ought to have something of the order of a basic "cross your heart", Playtex type of bra. For authentic Quirrie lines, think about a push-up, wonderbra or (best of all) a Marilynesque conical bra.

Trim your new outfits with belts, brooches, pearls and anything else you can find. However, two absolute essentials must be considered besides. First, no Quirrie, Trentish or Kadorian lady will ever leave the house without gloves and only very rarely without a hat. Gloves are not worn in the Pit because one's hands are cold, but because Bongos don't wear them. They are the absolute last word in class and style and you ought to have lots of them.

Secondly, tights are hideous! Get yourself a good suspender belt immediately and start wearing stockings. If you want advice about stockings, do ask; I shall be delighted to discuss them on a different occasion.

You may be able to obtain properly-styled clothing second-hand. However, if you can use a sewing machine, why not make your own? Quirrie skirts are one of the easiest things in the world to make!

Good luck! Do send photographs when you have affected your transformation – brunettes always like to see pictures of well-dressed blondes!

And *vice versa* indeed!

Leave a Response »

Short Hair Tuesday, Apr 17 2007

Aristasian Fashion and Stylearistasia9:02 am

Miss Delphine asked:

I know that Aristasia is a break from all the rather horrid Post-Eclipse values, a place where they never happened, and a place where the divinity of feminine is honored as it should be, but my question, pettes, is what is your view on hair? I feel very silly for asking this, but it is something that has been bothering me as of late. You see, I myself have sported a rather…. severe cut, so it might be said. A Shingle cut, they call it, unless I am mistaken. It's rather short, a few inches long at the longest points. I was wondering, however, on whether my hair would be considered inappropriate.

I would certainly hate to break any rules, as I do not like to be a troublemaker… for the most part. I have tried to grow my hair out before, yes, as I did have long hair for many years, but I find that short hair is very easy to take care of, which is a definite plus to disorganized brunettes such as myself. Well… dears… I think I've prattled on about this long enough, and I do hope that my question isn't considered extremely foolish… Your views, as quite distinguished pettes in my eyes, would be much appreciated in this matter, which somehow I found both grave and silly at the same time.

Thank you ever so much for listening to me.

The Blonde Management answered:

It is sometimes said that one can get away with anything in Aristasia (dress-wise) so long as one can carry it off with style. Of course within reason. No one can get away with track-suits or dungarees because no one can carry them off with style – unless she is carrying them off to the dump.

Short hair is a tricky issue partly because it is so associated with the masculinism of the Pit. If one wears it one needs to carry it off with a very great deal of style, which means that it is not an "easy option" at all. It needs to be very sharp and very Vintesse or Infra. One needs to dress and make up very carefully to convey the statement that this is *not* bongo short hair but something quite different and pretty much opposite therefrom.

Naturally short hair is much more acceptable for a brunette than for a blonde. Short hair on a blonde is a very bold move indeed and only the cleverest of stylists should attempt that.

As to rules, there are no Empire-wide ones on this subject, though each District will have its own regulations and particular institutions, such as schools and military establishments will usually have stricter ones.

Miss Iris added:

I think short hair can look absolutely divine, but, as the management mentioned, one must have the right sort of cut. Vintesse cuts are very smart – I myself am out of touch with my province for wearing my hair long, but most pettes there wear theirs short and there is a whole range of styles. (Curly or waved bobs are best for blondes, I think.)

Other short styles that look smart are the Quirrie short ones. Most Quirrie clothes and styles are so feminine that the short cut just adds a touch of pertness and piquancy. Miss Audrey Hepburn is perhaps the finest example, but many Quirrie magazines feature blondes and brunettes with charming pin-curled and set short styles. Miss Kim Novak and Miss Leslie Caron are notable examples.

The Blonde Management noted:

And of course, short hair can mean so many different things when used with style. For Miss Hepburn it is terribly *chic* and sophisticated whereas with Miss Caron it is just the reverse – *gamin* and ever-so-slightly, but quite charmingly, *gauche*.

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